

You Can and Must Resist Temptation Part 2

sermonaudio.com

1 Corinthians

By Jess Arnds

Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Preached on: Sunday, January 5, 2020

Providence Church
2146 Buford Hwy
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

Website: www.providenceduluth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch

Good morning everyone. Thank you again, Ted, for that hymn, "Great is Thy faithfulness," taken from Lamentations 3:22, "His mercies are new every morning, they're renewed every morning. It's the promise really what it's referring to is the promise that God will keep his covenant to establish an everlasting kingdom in which righteousness will dwell. He will be faithful to that promise to you. So no matter how bleak it is, God's mercies every time that sun comes up, God is reminding you that he will keep his promise and that all who trust in him will enter that kingdom and what an awesome thing.

I want to make just a couple of comments before we get into this passage which is very very important and very heavy. The first is, first of all, my wife mentioned last week that I should probably let you know that I'm really not offended if you forgot my birthday. I just, you know, that's not... I was just joking. There's always people, people say there's an element of truth in every joke. Not with me. There's an element of ridiculousness in every joke so I thought it would be funny and so I...if any of you were afraid that I was mad at you, please don't worry. I really don't care.

The other thing is my leg is healing up nicely. No infection so far after I accidentally stabbed myself in the leg with a new knife that Jack gave me. Thank you, Jack. It was very sharp, very clean cut. So he this week, so he had given me this knife, this pocket knife, you know the ones that open up, but he bought me a rubber katana blade this week so that I would not hurt myself. So thank you, Jack.

So anyways, okay, so we've got a lot to cover today and it is a heavy subject and we're gonna dive right into it, okay? Because here's the thing, folks: it is incredible how intense the word of God is over and over and over again. We always want to soften it and make it feel like this light fluffy thing. We're not comfortable with how intense God is and his love is deep and intense and so is his holiness, and so is his anger, so is his righteousness. All of it, everything about God is big and intense and pure, and so as we turn to the word of God, I really want us to strap on our helmets and our seatbelts because it really matters and we're gonna cover some ground today as well, so you're gonna need to focus. So as we get ready for that, turn to 1 Corinthians 10 and we will start reading in verse 1 and go down to, we'll actually go down to verse 14 today. 1 Corinthians 10:1-14, Paul says this,

1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. 6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

As promised, I would like us to read together verses 12 and 13, read it out loud with me. 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." You all read it and it applies to every one of you. It applies to every one of you and it applies to me as well.

As we saw last week, this passage serves as an encouragement and a warning. There are at least two categories of people in the church: those who desire to get away with sin, and those who desire to get away from sin. It's an encouragement to those who desire to resist temptation to live their life for the honor of Christ and who are willing to follow him, but it is also a warning to those who want to indulge sin and who are comfortable with toying with it. It's a warning and an encouragement. This is a warning against complacency and it's a promise that you will never be in a situation that forces you to sin.

Let me make a few more observations as well on top of that. Among those who believe, among those who consider themselves to be spiritual, there are two more categories to consider here. Two more categories. The first category are the arrogant, and the second category are the cowardly. The arrogant and the cowardly. Both are self-centered. Both are looking out for their own interests and both are looking to their own ability. The arrogant believe that they cannot fall, that no matter what situation they're in, that they are above temptation and that they cannot fall. They're impervious to temptation. The cowardly believe that they cannot stand. Do you see the difference? Both looking to their own ability, the arrogant believe that they cannot fall, the cowardly believe that they

cannot stand and this passage addresses both of them because both of them are wrong. What is it that the arrogant need? They need a healthy dose of fear. A healthy dose of fear. The opposite of arrogance, it's not just humility, it's fear, a healthy fear. And what is it that the cowardly need? They need a healthy dose of confidence and boldness.

So with those things in mind, let's turn to the Lord in prayer that the arrogant would get that dose of fear, because there are arrogant people in this building that need to fear, and there are cowardly people in this building who need the confidence in the faithfulness of God. So let's pray because the only way for that to take place is for the Holy Spirit to go to work in your heart through the word of God.

Let's pray.

Father, we come to You because we desperately need You, because we desperately need to be right with You. Father, we want to love You, we want to approach You in the way that is appropriate. We want to see life through Your lens. We want to see ourselves accurately and we want to trust You according to what is true. Lord, please help us today. Please, please cause the arrogant to fear and cause the cowardly to have confidence in You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Before we get straight into this passage, there is a context here in the book of 1 Corinthians. Look at the beginning of verse 1. You see there it has the word "For." No one starts a conversation with the word "for," right? That's not the beginning of a conversation. There's no chapter, you won't come across a book and a chapter written by somebody who's a good writer who starts with the word "for." So what does this signify? There is a context. There is a conversation going on. You've dropped into the middle of this conversation so we need to consider this context to understand what it is that Paul is saying here. That means we need to trace back this context. Okay, so we're gonna take a quick exercise in hermeneutics, the interpretation of Scripture, and I want to do this for your sake because not everyone really knows how to read the Bible so I want to help you see this. So look at your Bibles and let's trace back this context. Look for words that are connecting words like the words "for, therefore, but, then, so," and other words like that.

So look at verse 27, it says, "but"; 26, "therefore." Okay, we've got to take another step back. "For"; 17, "for"; 16, "for"; 15, "but." Okay, look, the context is already extending this far back. Keep following this. Verse 14, "so"; verse 10, "or"; verse 9, "for"; and then verse 6 we have the word "or" to start verse 6; and then verses 1 through 10 are a series of rhetorical questions that come from the previous sections. So all of this is already connected to chapter 10, so all of chapter 9 is the context for chapter 10 but it doesn't stop there. Look back at chapter 8, verse 13, "therefore"; verse 12, "and so"; verse 11, "for"; verse 10, "for"; verse 9, "but"; verse 7, "however"; verse 6, "yet"; verse 5, "for"; verse 4, "therefore"; verse 3, "but"; and then we get to verse 1, "now." There's a whole context all the way back to chapter 8. That word "now" signifies a change in subject and if you look at the context, he's clearly shifting the subject. Chapter 7 is a different context but now chapter 8 all the way through chapter 10 is one long context, one long section.

So to understand why this passage is here, our passage is here, we need to understand that context, so look at this here. Chapter 8, verse 1, Paul says this, "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge," and then he says, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." Okay, so he's now switched the context here from the previous chapter to now he's talking about things sacrificed to idols. What the Corinthians had done, they had sent someone to Paul to ask him questions on behalf of the church and one of the questions that they had was, "Paul, what are we to do about eating meat sacrificed to idols?" And one of the things that they start out saying here is, "We know that we all have knowledge." Paul right there is quoting what the Corinthians were asking him, okay? So he says, "Concerning the things sacrificed to idols, quote, quoting you guys, "we know that we all have knowledge." Then he pauses right there. Before he continues with their question, he addresses that issue. We all have knowledge. He says, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. The Corinthians had a controversy brewing about whether it was okay to eat meat sacrificed to idols. One of the things that they said is that, "We know that we all have knowledge," and so Paul addresses that and Paul here does not mean to say that knowledge is bad. He says that knowledge divorced from love is bad; that knowledge divorced from love is arrogant. Knowledge that is not used in the hands and motivated by love is puffed up and it's destructive. On the other hand, love that uses this knowledge, or knowledge that is employed by love, motivated by love, controlled by love, is edifying.

So knowledge in the hands of love builds up the church. In fact, he says in 1 Corinthians 13 that, "If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing." So he's addressing an issue here with the Corinthians, they are arrogant, they are puffed up, and this is just one more way that they are showing their arrogance is that they're focused on their knowledge and they're using their knowledge against each other to tear one another down, they're using their knowledge to serve themselves rather than to build up the body.

So then he gets back to the subject in verse 4. He says, "Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one." Okay, so having this knowledge, some of the Corinthians had no problem eating meat sacrificed to idols. They went into these pagan temples or into the marketplaces and grabbed the meat that was marked "sacrificed to such-and-such an idol," and they would eat it and because they knew that the idol was nothing, it didn't bother their conscience to do so. To them they were not worshiping the idol so they felt free to participate. They also felt that others should not be bothered by their freedom, so they wanted Paul's stamp of approval on their exercise of freedom. That's why they're writing him. They wanted Paul to approve this and to basically say, "Paul, don't you agree idols are nothing? So these people in their conscience, they need to get over it." But Paul says that they're asking the wrong question. The question is not, "What am I free to do?" but "How does love use my freedom to glorify God, by edifying others, and being a testimony to the Gospel?" Do you see that difference? The question is not, "What am I free to do?" The question is, "How can I through love build up the body of Christ and advance the Gospel?"

You'll begin to see this walked out a little bit more as he goes through this chapter, but he says, Paul says that, oh yeah, so in verse 7 he says this, "However not all men have this knowledge," not all men know that these idols are nothing, "but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled." So they went in, they felt that through their participation in this that they were worshipping an idol and it was violating their conscience. They felt it was wrong because they really considered that what they were doing was an act of worship to a false god. And as Romans 14:23 says, "He who doubts is condemned if he eats because his eating is not from faith. Whatever is not from faith is sin." And as Martin Luther said, to violate your conscience is neither right nor safe. When you begin to violate your conscience, you have sinned. You have sinned and it begins to break down the walls of resistance to more and more sin, greater and greater acts of rebellion against God, because you crossed the line in your conscience. It's a big deal.

Well, he continues in verse 8, "But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat." Okay, so this is the line of reasoning that the Corinthians were saying, "Hey, we're not better one way or the other."

Verse 9 say, "But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? Do you see that, that what you do has an impact on one another, that you set an example for one another? And he says take care that this liberty does not somehow become a stumbling block. You see, Paul's concern was not with what they were free to do but how it would impact those around them.

Verse 11, "For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died." Verse 12, "And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ." Kind of a big deal, isn't it, that if you cause your brother to stumble, if you become a stumbling block to your brother and he sins, you have sinned against Christ.

Verse 13, Paul says this, "Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble." Isn't that an amazing difference of mindset? Is that your mindset? Is your biggest concern what you are free to do or is it, "How can I build up my brothers and sisters in Christ? How can I not put a stumbling block in their way?" Paul's mindset is one of service to God and serving others, not serving self, and Paul beyond that is fearful of sinning himself and he's fearful of causing his brother to stumble.

Galatians 5:13, "you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Your freedom is not for you, it is to free you up to serve others, your freedom in Christ.

It's a very serious matter to cause someone to stumble. In fact, Matthew 18 makes this point vividly. It says, this is Jesus speaking, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who

believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." Let that kind of sink in, no pun intended. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea. If someone has a conscience issue about something, if someone is struggling and you put something in their way that leads them into temptation, Jesus Christ himself takes that very seriously.

So he continues in chapter 9, Paul says this, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship... My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.' God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops." Okay, what's he saying here? Right? Paul goes beyond even just using freedoms and liberties that would tempt people into sin, he goes beyond that to now even saying, "I have a right to all of these things: a believing wife, I have a right to earn a living by the Gospel, and it would be right for me to pursue these things."

But look at his mindset, verse 12, "If others share the right over you, do we not more?" He says this, "Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ." Paul laid down even good things, rights that he had, for the sake of the Gospel. He would rather deny himself his rights so that the Gospel may shine through.

Verse 19, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more." Paul was free but he enslaved himself to the good of others, just as Christ did, just as Christ left his throne and glory and became a bonds slave for your sake, for our sake.

Verse 23, "I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it." And lest you think that all of this is some hyper-spiritual thing that is only for the apostles, Paul says all the way in 11:1, you don't have to look there but he says this in multiple places in the epistles, he says, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." Paul's mindset here is for you and me and what is this mindset? That though he is free from all men, he has made himself a slave of all, verse 19, "so that he may win the more." He does everything for the sake of the Gospel and for the good of his brothers and sisters. So he's willing to lay it all down for that.

Okay, so that's his mindset, totally different mindset than the Corinthians had. So to sum up. The Corinthians were more concerned about what they were free to do and did not want to be limited by others, and Paul says that their freedoms and knowledge had to be governed by love for neighbor and the progress of the Gospel to the glory of God. That's what had to govern their mindset and their decisions. So the Corinthians lacked love but more than that, they lacked fear. They lacked fear. They should have feared sin. They should have feared God's judgment but they didn't. They were arrogant and selfish when they should have been humble and loving and others oriented, and Paul exemplified both godly love and godly fear.

What do I mean by that? Where do we see this fear? Look at verse 24 of chapter 9, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air," verse 27, "but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." We could probably spend a whole sermon talking about all the ways in which Paul feared that he would be disqualified or that he may have run his race in vain.

Paul feared disqualification. That word "disqualified," it's "adokimos," it means, "unqualified; worthless," it means "not approved," it means "proven false or shown to be a counterfeit." Paul was afraid that he would do something, that he would do something to disqualify himself from service to God. He was concerned about his own participation in the Gospel. He wanted to be used in Gospel service. He wanted to be fruitful in Gospel service and he wanted to be used for its progress and the building up of every believer, and if he was not careful, he could find himself entrenched in disqualifying sin and he would be rendered useless, and this was a real possibility. This was a real possibility. He demonstrated this attitude that we are to take, that of a competitor who is training hard to win because success is not guaranteed.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul uses the same word and he says, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are of the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail to meet the test?" That's that same word for "disqualified." That there are people who believe, who think that they're in the church but are, in fact, failing the test of genuine faith.

So Paul feared disqualification from service and also he feared that somehow he might be shown by a persistence in sin, by being trapped in sin, that he might show a false faith and that's what he was concerned about with the Corinthians, and we read that last week. Some of you don't know God and that is true of some of you here. Some of you do not know God and you demonstrate it through attitudes, through entrenchment in sin, through a commitment to a way of life that is against God, and yet you want to remain as part of the community and experience the blessings and the benefits of this community of people. Paul was fearful that some of them may be found to be unqualified for service, and that still others may demonstrate that Christ did not dwell in them.

You see, Paul was fearful of sinning. He was fearful of being disqualified and he was fearful of doing anything that would discredit or hinder the Gospel, and he did not trust himself. Why? Why did he not trust himself? And you think about this, right? Our world tells us to trust ourselves, to trust in your heart, listen to your heart, but Paul here did not trust himself. This is the Apostle Paul who had talked to Christ personally, who had been called into ministry personally. Why is it that Paul was so distrusting of himself? Well, that brings us to our current context. The reason he didn't trust himself was because he knew the Old Testament. He knew the history of Israel. And he urges the Corinthians to take heed to that same history so that they would not fall by the same patterns of disobedience and unbelief; so that they would not be arrogant and set themselves up for a fall into sin and disqualification.

As we look at this, consider this for yourself. Do you trust yourself? Do you believe that you can't fall? Do you believe that you are impervious to sin? Do you believe that you can approach sin flippantly? That you can even dabble in it and it not hurt you? That you can get out any time you want?

Let's look at chapter 10. We'll break this down into three points. We won't cover all of them thoroughly today but the first point is the illusion of safety. The illusion of safety, verse 1 through 5. It's very interesting that Paul in the middle of this section inserts this terrifying warning. Verse 1, "I do not want you to be," this is right after he said he was afraid of being disqualified, he says,

1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

Paul shows us that any of us could fall by the same temptations that the fathers in the wilderness fell by. Think about this of anyone in the history of the world that you think would have the strongest faith, the most enduring commitment to the Lord, the deepest gratitude to him, the greatest fear of him, what generation in the history of the world do you think that would be? It would be the one that saw the greatest display of God's power displayed against the Egyptians. You know, there's no other generation in history that saw the wonders that that generation saw. They saw the 10 plagues. They saw how Egypt was destroyed, the most powerful nation on earth was destroyed not by them and not by their might but by the power of God in miraculous display against all of the idols of Egypt and against Pharaoh himself. They saw how the destroying spirit passed over the children of Israel, the ones who put the blood on the doorpost during the Passover. He passed over their people and he killed the firstborn of the Egyptians. They saw all that. They saw how the Lord humbled Pharaoh. How the Lord convinced Pharaoh to let them go. They saw how a cloud, a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire led them out into the

wilderness. They saw how when they were trapped against the Red Sea and the mighty Egyptian army with all of their chariots were racing towards them, they saw how the Lord split the Red Sea, warded off that army, and then drowned that entire army.

They saw those things and what's really interesting, at the end of Exodus 14, after they had seen all that and, I mean, I would love to read that whole chapter to you, we don't have time. It's amazing. I would recommend that to you. Read the end of Exodus 13 through 14 and just put yourself in their shoes, and at the end of chapter 14, verse 30 it says, "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." Their former masters, their former oppressors, they saw their bodies washing up on the seashore.

"When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses." That's what is meant when it says they were baptized into Moses. They believed. They followed. I mean, they didn't stay in Egypt, they actually followed Moses out there through the Red Sea and into the wilderness. And they all saw these things, they had enough faith to walk between the two walls of water, and when they came out the other side, they were fully convinced, "This is God. Moses is His mouthpiece, is His spokesman, is His representative." And they believed, two million people strong. They were all there and yet Scripture says with most of them God was not well-pleased for their bodies were laid low in the wilderness. As I mentioned last week, of that entire generation, of all the people who saw those wonders, all the adults in that generation, only Caleb and Joshua entered the Promised Land. The rest were judged because of their demonstrated unbelief and disobedience in the wilderness.

That is why Paul was fearful of being disqualified, because he knew that no amount of spiritual experiences, no amount of being involved in the congregation, no amount of knowledge of God's will, God's power, exempts you from the lure of temptation. Again, you would think that if anybody was prepared to deal with the temptations that they would face, it would be the people of Israel. If anyone would have faith in God it would be them, and Paul who saw Jesus Christ himself and had performed miracles in his name, knew that even he was not beyond temptation's reach.

They were baptized into Moses. They were sustained by Christ himself. They ate spiritual food. They drank spiritual drink. There were two cases where they had no water and the Lord through Moses spoke to a dry rock and out of it came fountains of water, enough to water the whole congregation of Israel and their flocks and herds. And we could go into all the other ways. I mean, we could study this for months, guys, the ways that the Lord took care of Israel in the wilderness. But you see, Paul saw, he read that Old Testament, he saw that those people fell by disobedience and unbelief in the wilderness and they disqualified themselves from entering the Promised Land and even Moses disqualified himself from entering the Promised Land. If anyone had a reason to think that they were safe and entitled, it was the people of Israel. Who are you to trust in yourself? Why do you think that you are above temptation? Why don't you take it seriously?

Here's another reason why Paul did not trust himself. It was not the external temptation that killed Israel, and it's not the external temptation that will kill you. Look at verse 6, this is the initiator of sin. So we have the illusion of safety, number 2, the initiator of sin in verse 6. It says,

6 Now these things happened as examples for us [for what purpose?], so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

This is the thing that you must be the most vigilant about because the initiator of sin, the source of sin is not the external pressures, it is your cravings. It is your cravings. It is the cravings of your heart. It is the desire of your heart.

This word for "craving," its "epithumeo," and it means "to desire; long for; lust for; desire greatly; and to covet." What is it that you long for? What is it that you crave? What is it that you feel that you just must have? That is what you must be careful of. That is what will kill you. That is what will lead you astray. The thing that Paul feared the most was his own cravings, the intense desires of the heart, and our craving for evil things that leads us into idolatry, immorality, and to testing the Lord and to grumbling just like the Israelites.

Now think about this. What was so evil about what the Israelites craved? Listen to Numbers 11:4. It says, "The rabble who were among them had greedy desires," cravings, "and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, 'Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.'" That was what they craved. That was the evil craving that led them into sin and rebellion and grumbling against the Lord. They wanted meat. They wanted spices. They wanted fish. They wanted fresh food. You think about this, they were enslaved in Egypt, God set them free, and he promised them that there was a land flowing with milk and honey but, "You must follow Me through the wilderness to get there." Isn't it interesting that life for them was harder after they were set free from their bondage. Life was more difficult. In Egypt, they weren't going camping. How many of you like camping? Okay, how many of you would like to do it for 3-4 months 40 years? No. Is it easier to camp or is it easier to be in your house? Have you ever tried camping in a desert? That's what they were doing. They went three days and they're like, "Where's water?" Three days after God drowned the Egyptians, they're like, "Did you bring us out here to die, Moses? Where's the water?" And then they're like, "Where's the meat and where's the onions and the garlic?" And then they're like, "Do you know what? We wish we were still in Egypt. It would have been better for us," they say somewhere in Exodus or Numbers, "It would be better for the Lord to have struck us down in Egypt next to our pots of meat and bread, as much bread as we could eat." Life as a slave in Egypt was easier than following God in the wilderness and they craved meat more than they craved God. They were greedy and covetous and they would rather have that than a right relationship with God, and they would rather have it now than wait a little while until they had their Promised Land.

Isn't that true? Life as a Christian is not easy, is it? It's not easier. You must deny yourself and Paul is even here denying his own rights for the sake of the Gospel. He is denying himself meat. Do you see the correlation? These Corinthians wanted meat and were willing to step over each other in order to get it, willing to divide with one another for the sake of meat so that they would have a nice tasty treat. That's what they were covetous over. Those were the evil desires and those evil desires are what led them into the path of temptation and into the path of destruction.

What is it that you crave, that when you don't get it, you begin to question God's goodness, God's will, God's timing, and you begin to step out from under his will in order to get it? What is that thing for you because it will not obviously be an evil thing that you crave but it will elevate itself in your heart above God and it will lead you away from him. As Hebrews 3:13 says, "Take care, brothers, whether there be found in you an evil unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God." Do not trust your heart. We will talk more about that next week.

Cravings of the heart are the things that will kill you. Be careful like the Israelites that you are not more loyal to your stomach than you are to the Lord; that your belly is not your god. Be careful that when you do not get these cravings, that you do not grow ungrateful and distrusting of God in his goodness; that you begin to turn on one another in the process; that you begin to be unwilling to endure hardship on the way to the Promised Land and that you would prefer your slavery to sin over suffering with the Lord.

If you walk away with nothing else, this is what you need to know: you cannot trust your heart, your heart and its cravings will lead you into sin. And the third point here is the illustrations of judgment and we will save these for next week, but there's those four illustrations of judgment: idolatry, immorality, testing the Lord, and grumbling. We usually see idolatry and immorality as pretty bad, we tend to be okay with grumbling on a consistent continual basis. Next week we will get into that and we pray that, I pray honestly, guys. Scripture was not written as an FYI. This isn't an encyclopedia. There's a whole lot going on in the world and in the universe that God knows about that he didn't tell us because it's just information. The Scripture was given to us for our example so that we would learn from it, and I'm praying that the Lord would give us eyes to see where we are raising up idols in our heart, where we are tempted by immorality, or where we're putting ourselves in harm's way with immorality, where we are putting the Lord to the test, and that we would have a renewed conscience when it comes to grumbling; that we would not be okay with that existing in our heart.

At this time, we will pray but it is time to come to the Lord's Supper and Ty, I'm sure, will talk about this, but our passage says to take care, that he who thinks he stand, take care lest he fall. The Corinthians in their arrogance and in their selfishness were sinning against the body, they were sinning against the congregation, they were dishonoring one another, and Paul says for this reason, some of you are sick and some of you are even dead because of that. May the example of the Old Testament really loom large in our minds.

Let me pray for you, okay?

Father, we desperately need You to open our eyes to these things. Please show us, Lord, the cravings of our heart and that we would walk carefully because our hearts manufacture idols. And may we look to Christ desperately as the One who came to save and to sanctify us for Your glory, and may the freedom that we find in Him be used to advance the Gospel and to serve the best interest of our neighbor. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.